

TITLE: PORTABLE ION GENERATOR AND DUST COLLECTOR

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to ion generators and in particular battery-operated portable ion generators for personal use and for air purification.

5 BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

Negative ion generators have been extensively used for many years to improve the air environment in a room or in a car. Typically these ion generators require power from household outlets or from car cigarette lighter sockets. This
10 fact makes such units awkward to install because of the wires involved.

Ion generators have also been used as air purifiers by acting as dust collectors. An example of such an application is US Patent No. 5,538,692 (adopted by reference
15 herein).

During my experiments with ionizers, I found that a good stream of ions can be produced having a very small current passing through the ionizing needles. For instance 1 microampere of current will produce ($10^{-6} \times 6.28 \times 10^{23}$) or
20 6.28×10^{17} ions per second where 6.28×10^{23} is Avogadro's number, namely the number of electrons in one Coulomb of charge. One coulomb per second is one ampere. Therefore, the number of ions per second generated by a current of one microampere is 628 followed by 15 zeroes.

25 Assuming the ionizer is powered by a 9 volt battery and assuming an ideal transformation circuit to generate high voltage, the current drawn from the battery would be inversely

proportional to the voltage of the battery. Thus, if the ionizing voltage is 6×10^3 volts, the battery current drawn from a 9 volt battery would be $1 \times 10^{-6} \times (6 \times 10^3 / 9) = .666$ milliamps. Even if one assumes a 50% efficient for a practical
5 transformation circuit, a battery current of only be 1.33 milliamps would be required to generate 6.28×10^{10} ions/sec. Current of this magnitude could be easily accommodated by an ordinary battery, particularly those of the alkaline type.

My present invention provides for such an efficient
10 voltage converter.

It is therefore an object of my invention to provide an ion generator which is portable, battery operated and small enough to be worn as a pendent with a very long battery life.

It is another object of my invention to provide a
15 battery operated, self-contained, ionizing dust collector which can be placed on a desk or on a car dash.

The invention in its general form will first be described, and then its implementation in terms of specific embodiments will be detailed with reference to the drawings
20 following hereafter. These embodiments are intended to demonstrate the principle of the invention, and the manner of its implementation. The invention in its broadest and more specific forms will then be further described, and defined, in each of the individual claims which conclude this
25 Specification.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

My invention, in one aspect is based on a circuit which includes an oscillator which changes the battery voltage
30 from DC to AC. The AC voltage is then transformed to a higher voltage by a voltage conversion circuit. Preferably, such a

circuit includes a transformer which charges an output capacitor. This capacitor can be the last capacitor of a diode-capacitor multiplier circuit in the form of a "ladder" network. Either a single capacitor or group capacitors
5 constitutes a capacitor means, as hereafter so referenced. The capacitors in the bank of capacitors in the diode-capacitor multiplier each charges up to twice the output transformer voltage. The entire diode-capacitor ladder network multiplier can build the voltage up by 10 times or more. The output
10 capacitor means in all cases supplies voltage to the ionizing element, eg. to an ion generating needle(s).

In my experiments, I have found that the voltage on the output capacitor means will remain high for a while even after the input the oscillator stops operating. The reason for
15 this is that the ionizing needle(s) take a very small current out of the capacitor means(a few microamperes). In view of the above, I reasoned that the oscillator does not have to be operating all the time in order to provide sufficient voltage to the ionizing needle(s). Instead it can operate
20 intermittently. In this way, a lot of energy from the battery can be saved.

Thus, according to the invention, the driving oscillator is turned ON for only intermittent intervals, e.g. only approximately one tenth of the time, without much loss of
25 output voltage on the ionizing needle(s). In particular, an experimental ionizer operating from a 9-volt battery has been shown to draw only 120 microamps from the battery and is expected to last for in excess of three months of continuous operation.

30 In making ion generators completely self contained without connection to a power outlet, there is a need to

provide a counter electrode. The counter electrode must be connected to an output lead of the transformer to provide a current flow through the ladder network. Normally this lead would be grounded to earth through the power source i.e. the
5 grid power outlet or the cigarette lighter socket in a car. But in case of a self-contained unit, there is no readily apparent place for connection of the counter electrode.

I have found that a relatively large conducting body compared to the ion emitter can be made to act as a counter
10 electrode. This can be a large piece of metal that the unit sits on or a human body, as in the case where an ionizer is worn as a pendant. Conveniently, the strap or chain suspending the ionizer may provide the electrical connection to the body. Ions will then be drawn to the body completing
15 the circuit. When a large plate is used as the counter-electrode, it will attract the ions being generated, thus similarly completing the electrical circuit.

According to a further aspect, my invention provides a self contained battery-operated ionizer which can also
20 collect dust by using a conductive or partially conductive dust collecting surface which is connected as a counter electrode. This dust collecting surface, which is of an opposite polarity from that of the needle(s), collects the dust particles which are charged by the ions emitted by the
25 ionizing needle(s) in the manner of U.S. Patent No. 5,538,692. An especially useful feature of this present invention is that the dust collecting surface is separable from its base and may be removed for cleaning.

The foregoing summarizes the principal features of
30 the invention and some of its optional aspects. The invention may be further understood by the description of the preferred

embodiments, in conjunction with the drawings, which now follow.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

5 Fig 1 shows the basic electronic circuit for the battery operated portable ionizer.

 Fig. 1a is a timing diagram showing the current waveform over time at the input to the transformer of Fig. 1.

 Fig. 1b is a timing diagram showing how the high
10 voltage at the output of the diode-capacitor multiplier varies with time.

 Fig 2 is a practical circuit which produces the waveform of Fig 1a.

 Fig.3 shows an ionizer made into a pendant with a
15 conductive cord by which can be worn by a person. The person in such case acts as the counter electrode.

 Fig. 4 is a similar circuit as that of Fig. 1 intended for a dust collector with the addition of an optional second diode-capacitor multiplier to produce a second voltage
20 of opposite polarity which is connected to an element which acts as the counter electrode.

 Fig. 5 shows a practical application of the circuit of Fig. 4, wherein the ring in the middle of the cylinder acts as the counter electrode and also collects dust which is
25 charged by the ions.

 Fig. 6 shows another application of the apparatus of Fig. 5. In this case a removable conducting ring is located above the ionizing needle. Ions generated by the needle are attracted to the ring, which also collects dust which has been
30 charged by the ions.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

In Fig. 1, a battery 1 supplies power to electronic circuit 2. Circuit 2 provides an AC voltage to transformer 3. Circuit 2 is such that it produces an interrupted or intermittent AC voltage to transformer 3 as shown in Figure 1a. While a single high voltage transformer may be employed as a voltage conversion circuit, a preferred system relies upon a ladder network as in Fig. 1. Connected to the output of transformer 3 is a diode-capacitor multiplier 4 which produces a high voltage (in this case negative) to ionizing needle 5 which serves on an ion-emitter. Ions 21 are rapidly repelled outwardly from the tip of the needle 5 by their repulsive charge. During the period of time when circuit 2 is active (ON), the capacitors in the diode-capacitor multiplier 4 get charged up; and during the inactive period (OFF), the capacitors keep their voltage minus a small amount due to current drawn out by the ionizing needle.

Fig. 1b shows the waveform of the voltage at the ionizing needle. With this arrangement, the ionizing needle keeps emitting ions even during the time when the circuit 2 is OFF. The ratio of time during which circuit 2 is ON as compared to the time it is OFF can be as much as 10 to 1 or greater. The current drain on the battery is much smaller than if the circuit 2 were ON continuously. In this way, a battery supplying power to the ionizer unit will last for a very long time with very little sacrifice in efficiency of the ionizer. In one case, an ionizer built using a standard 9 volt alkaline battery is estimated to last for 3 months of continuous operation. Using larger batteries, size C for example, a portable ionizer can be built where the batteries

may last for more than a year, subject to their inherent shelf-life.

Fig. 2 shows a very simple circuit for an oscillator which can be used to produce the intermittent voltage. A
5 tickler coil 20 on the transformer 3 induces oscillations because the base of transistor 6 receives an out-of-phase voltage from the transformer 3 which produces positive feedback causing oscillations. When the oscillator starts,
10 the base circuit winding produces an AC voltage which gets rectified by the base-emitter junction of the transistor and develops a negative voltage on capacitor 7. This negative voltage buildup eventually biases the transistor OFF. This
15 state lasts until the voltage accumulated on the capacitor 7 leaks off via the resistor 8 and the process starts all over again.

Fig. 3 shows a practical application of one aspect of the invention where a battery-operated negative ion generator is made into a pendant 9. Strap 10 is made of
20 either a metallic chain or a cord made of conducting plastic or the like. Strap 10 is connected internally to the ground terminal of the transformer or diode-capacitor multiplier. The wearer acts as the counter electrode to the needle electrode
5. Other forms of conductive connection means to the body may also be provided, such as by a metal plate that is held in the
25 hand.

Fig. 4 is a variant of the circuit of Fig. 1. Here, another diode-capacitor multiplier 4a is added to produce a positive high voltage. The positive high voltage of ladder
30 network 4a is connected to a metal counter electrode, in this case ring 11. (Polarities in this and other applications may be reversed). This ring 11 is exposed to receive dust

particles 22 charged by ions 21 emitted by needle 5. Upon being discharged by contact with ring 11 the dust particles 22 will generally remain attached to the ring 11. Periodically, the ring 11 may be cleaned of such dust particles.

5 Fig. 5 shows an arrangement where the ionizer unit is made in a cylindrical case 12 serving as a base having an ionizing needle 5 on top and the counter electrode ring 11 in the middle of the case. The ring 11, being for example at positive potential, attracts anything that is charged
10 negatively including dust 22. In this way, the ionizer also becomes an air cleaner.

 Fig. 6 shows a similar arrangement as that of Fig. 5, except in this arrangement the counter electrode ring 11 is located, for example above the ionizing needle 5, mounted
15 above a base 23 by spaced struts 25 which serve as a support and provide electrical contact between the circuit 2 and ring 11. Air may pass freely over this base 23, flowing to the needle 5 and upwardly through the ring 11. The dust particles
20 22, charged by the negative ions 21 produced by the needle 5, are attracted by the positively charged ring 11 which acts as a counter electrode. Some of the charged dust 22 attracted by the ring 11 adheres to it. The ring 11 in Figure 6 may be readily removed from its support for cleaning.

 The relative positions of the ring 11 and needle 5
25 requires only that they be in a spaced relationship so that, mixed with air, ions will flow from the needle 5 to the ring 11.

CONCLUSION

 The foregoing has constituted a description of
30 specific embodiments showing how the invention may be applied

